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PROGRAMME PLANNING: COUNTRY AND INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

FIFTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR BHUTAN

Note by the Administrator

I. PREPARATORY PROCESS

1. The dialogue with the Royal Government of Bhutan on the preparation of the fifth country programme commenced with the mid-term review in 1989 and continued with the assessment in 1990 and the Advisory Note in 1991. The Planning Commission played a vital role in ensuring cohesion in the programming process. The preparation of the seventh Five-year Plan in 1990/91 and the timing of the fourth round table meeting in March 1992 facilitated the synchronization of the government planning and donor programming cycles. Thus the Planning Commission held consultations with all its major development partners to confirm support for seventh Plan programmes. All the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) partners formulated their programmes in 1991, adapting their timetables to fit in with the Government's planning cycle.

2. In the elaboration of seventh Plan programmes and projects, the United Nations specialized agencies, coordinated by the Resident Coordinator, provided extensive support in almost all sectors and programmes, reviewing the Plan, elaborating Plan project profiles and identifying technical assistance needs. This national planning and programming process made it possible for the Government to determine the respective roles of various donors and in particular of the JCGP partners. The identification of priorities for the use of UNDP resources was confirmed through this consultative planning process. In developing the fifth country programme, programme-specific missions were

undertaken by the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD), the UNDP Development Management Programme (UNDP/MDP), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The lessons learnt from the fourth country programme are reflected in the Plan specifically in the focus on a small number of programmes, a planning and policy framework as the basis for discussing programme intervention, and the closer linkages with other donors, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), and the greater use of cost-sharing.

II. ANALYTICAL COMMENTARY ON THE FIFTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME

3. The fifth country programme is focused on supporting four major areas of concentration - human resource development, improved efficiency in government and private sector development, sustainability in natural resources management, and regionally balanced development. Three major programmes have been elaborated, human resource development, efficiency in government and regional development in Zone IV (the eastern region). Major projects have been identified in transport, communications, power, industry, human settlements, forestry and horticulture, supporting priority government programmes in these sectors.

4. The three programmes directly support priority objectives of the seventh Five-year Plan, the focus in Zone IV providing an opportunity to focus and test the national objectives, and have an immediate impact on the lives of the people in this relatively less developed region. The sector level programmes are also in priority areas of the seventh Plan, and respond to the major development constraints faced by this land-locked, least developed country, particularly in transport and communications. Other interventions aim at sustainable utilization of Bhutan's natural resources, particularly hydroelectric power and forests, and exploiting its comparative advantage in horticulture.

5. The Government's very strong policy of environmental conservation is reflected in the Bhutan Environmental Conservation Trust Fund. The innovative and promising renewable natural resources policy of the Royal Government is an essential element of this sustainable environment policy, and UNDP interventions in foresty, and rural credit, and more comprehensively in Zone IV, will support a farmer-centred participatory, sustainable approach to improving the living standards of the poor without compromising the fragile ecosystem.

6. The UNDP intervention focuses on capacity-building as a primary objective, more generally in the human resources development programme, and in building up planning, management, and maintenance capacity in numerous sectors. In all cases the transfer of technology is linked to capacity-building with emphasis on management and training. Examples include telecommunications, civil aviation and surface transport, and horticulture in the agriculture sector. The efficiency in government programme is designed to

have an impact on all government operations, and in realigning the government role in a policy framework which encourages an increased role for the private sector.

7. In respect of women in development, the Government's policy of mainstreaming their participation in all sectors and programmes will be supported by UNDP, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) will consider support to capacity-building of the appropriate women's organizations to further the implementation of the policy. Overall, the Government's policies, programmes and resources allocation are very supportive of human development initiatives and UNDP's role in human resources development and improving efficiency in Government is considered central to the Government approach, complemented in other sectors by programmes supported by UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Government is also expanding its contacts with other countries in the region with a view to utilizing TCDC arrangements more extensively than in the past. Thus the UNDP supported programmes address directly the UNDP priority themes set out in Governing Council decision 90/34.

III. MANAGEMENT OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

8. As indicated above, the fifth country programme includes support to three national programmes. At the sectoral level, UNDP's role has been carefully articulated in relation to national priorities and policies, taking account of support from other donors whose contributions have expanded over recent years. Opportunities for cost-sharing have been identified, although in many cases, donors have preferred parallel financing or inclusion of projects prepared with United Nations system support in their own programmes.

9. In 1991, coordinated programming activities were possible on the part of all JCGP partners, in concert with preparation of the seventh Plan and for the round table meeting. Specific joint programming needs and activities were identified and initiated, especially in Zone IV regional development, (the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNCDF, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), FAO, WFP) in education and health (UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), WFP, UNCDF), water supply sanitation (UNICEF), women in development with (FAO, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) and statistics (UNFPA, UNICEF). On its part, the Government has welcomed such initiatives and in general has sought to mobilize and coordinate donor support for the seventh Plan. In addition to preparing for the Round Table Meeting in March 1992, the Government has also organized, with UNDP support, two sector coordination meetings, and several more are planned.

10. Overall, UNDP will be supporting the implementation of government plans to upgrade its own procedures and capacity for monitoring and evaluation, and this in turn should improve its participation in the general monitoring, reporting and evaluation procedures for UNDP-assisted activities. Similarly, the Government will introduce effective annual planning with the start of the seventh Plan and thereby enhance the effectiveness of the annual reviews of

the UNDP programme. While the Round Table meeting in March 1992 was to consider the seventh Plan, the next meeting is tentatively scheduled to coincide with the mid-term review of the Plan, and the UNDP mid-term review will be programmed accordingly.

11. The implementation of the programme, the current success with national execution provides a sound base for further use of this modality. The Government anticipates maintaining close cooperation with the United Nations specialized agencies in the execution of projects, to complement its own increasing capacity in certain areas of project operations. In this respect also emphasis will be placed in enhancing the availability and retention of counterparts as part of improving human resources management. Attention will also be paid to improving standardization of equipment and minimizing the presence of long-term expatriate inputs to avoid dependency. Similar concerns are present in respect of UNVs, and their role as agents for capacity-building will be emphasized in selecting their assignments.

IV. RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

12. The Administrator recommends that the Governing Council approve the fifth country programme for Bhutan.